REMARKS

Claims 2, 4 and 5 have been amended to include the recitations in claim 16, which has been canceled.

Claim 17 has been canceled.

Claims 20-31 have been added.

Upon entry of the Amendment, claims 2-15, 18-19 and 20-31 will be pending. Support for claims 20-22 can be found, for example in claim 17. Support for claims 23-25 can be found, for example, on page 45 of Applicants' specification. Support for claims 26-28 can be found, for example, on page 27, lines 19 and 24 of Applicants' specification. Support for claims 29-31 can bee found, for example, on page 27, line 19 to page 28, line 4 of Applicants' specification.

Claims 2-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Tan et al. ("Tan") in view of Takita et al. ("Takita").

Applicants respectfully submit that Tan does not disclose or suggest all the elements of the presently claimed invention. Claims 2, 4 and 5 have been amended to recite that the recording layer contains an infrared absorbing agent (formerly the subject matter of claim 16). Further, Applicants submit that Tan and Takita do not disclose or suggest a planographic printing plate precursor having the specific configuration presently claimed. Thus, the present invention would not be obvious over Tan in view of Takita.

Additionally, Applicants submit that the image forming mechanism of the planographic printing plate pecursor of the present invention is different from the image forming mechanisms of the references. That is, in the planographic printing plate precursor of the present invention,

an image is formed by heat generated from an infrared absorbing agent due to infrared ray exposure, and the recording layer includes the infrared absorbing agent. In contrast, the planographic printing plate precursors disclosed in Tan and Takita are conventional type planographic printing plate precursors, which do not have an image forming mechanism such as that described above, and there is no need for the recording layer to contain an absorbing agent for generating heat due to infrared ray exposure.

Additionally, since the infrared absorbing agent used in the recording layer of a planographic printing plate precursor having an image forming mechanism such as that of the present invention has a large molecular weight and is hydrophobic, solubility in an alkali developing solution is low. As a result, generally it is difficult to remove a non-image area by development and scumming easily occurs in the non-image area after development. Furthermore, because the contrast of an image due to exposure with an infrared laser is low, it has adverse effects on the removability of the non-image area by development.

The specific polymer included in the intermediate layer of the present invention is a polymer having good dissociability from a developing solution. As a result, even in the case of a recording layer in which a non-image portion is difficult to remove by development, by including the claimed intermediate layer, the non-image area can be effectively removed, and the occurrence of scumming in the non-image area can be effectively suppressed. Moreover, since the intermediate layer of the present invention contributes to improvement in adhesion between the support and the recording layer, along with the suppression of the occurrence of scumming in the non-image area as discussed above, printing durability can also be improved.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that the present invention would not be obvious over Tan and Takita. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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